

## **E**MERGENCY BACK UP CHILD CARE . . . GET WELL CARE . . .

SUMMER AND VACATION CARE. These employer-sponsored child care initiatives are targeted at specific work force issues. As an employer, you might consider one of these alternatives if:

- your employees need child care assistance, but a full time child care center is not feasible;
- the child care supply in your area is plentiful, but your employees need help in special situations;
- you experience absenteeism due to child care breakdowns and problems;
- you want to increase productivity during school vacations and/or summer time.

### *Emergency Back-Up Child Care*

Emergency child care programs provide care for employees' children when regular arrangements fall through. These programs can provide care:

- on days when school is closed due to weather or vacation,
- when a center or family child care provider is unavailable,
- when there is a sudden change in an employee's work schedule,
- sometimes, for children who are mildly ill (see also Get Well Care).

Emergency child care is *not* meant to replace or supplement an employee's normal child care arrangements on a regular basis. Rather, it is designed to enable employees to work on days, when their regular child care is unavailable. It can greatly reduce the number of missed work days due to child care interruptions. According to *Working Mother* magazine, most of its "100 Best Companies for Working Women" provide emergency back-up care as part of their benefits programs.

The cost of the care is usually covered partly or entirely by the employer. Employees call ahead to reserve a place in the program, and most programs limit the number of days per year an employee may use the program—typically six to ten days per year. Emergency child care sometimes includes care for mildly ill children.

Employers can arrange for emergency care through resource and referral agencies, or other community-based or private organizations capable of providing the service. An individual employer may establish a program to meet the needs of a workforce, or a consortium of employers may work together.

Short term care can be provided:

- at a central location, designed specifically for this use,
- by a child care provider who comes to the employee's home,
- in a family child care home operated as part of a network developed specifically for emergency back-up use.

### *Get Well Care*

Children who are sick—especially very young children—need their parents. Ideally, company policy should reflect that value and enable employees to use their own sick days to care for sick children. Utah companies recognize this problem—a survey of employers by the Office of Child Care found that about two-thirds of Utah employers allow parents to use their own sick leave to care for family members who are ill.

**Businesses lose  
an estimated  
\$3 billion a year  
due to child care  
related absences.**

*Source: Child Care  
Action Campaign*

Get Well Care is not intended to discourage parents from being with their sick children if they feel they should be with them. It is instead intended to provide coverage for those “in-between” days when employees could be at work if alternate child care were available.

Like emergency back-up child care, Get Well Care can take many forms. An employer can contract with a home care agency to provide care in the employee's home; care can be provided in family child care homes recruited for this purpose; or care can be provided in a center or at the worksite, in a setting designed specifically for Get Well Care. Some employers reserve space in an existing program, located at a hospital or other facility.

Get Well Care requires some special planning. Care might best be provided by a nurse or health care worker rather than a child care teacher or baby-sitter. Also, special health precautions and guidelines should be followed. Strict limitations must be set to prevent very sick children from attending, and therefore endangering their own health and that of others. Reliable access to a health care provider is essential. Get Well Care requires special materials such as beds and thermometers, and a very small teacher-child ratio—ideally no more than two children to one caregiver—in order to be effective. The best programs invite children to visit the setting when they are not sick, so that they will be familiar with it when they come in for Get Well Care.

## *Summer and Vacation Care*

Summer and vacation care is targeted at those times when working parents must either find alternate arrangements or take time off of work to cover school vacation days and/or the gap between summer camp and school or child care schedules. Employer responses include:

- **School holiday and vacation care programs on or near the worksite**

These programs might include field trips, movies, and sports activities for school-age children. Parents bring their children to work with them, and pick them up at the end of the day. Visiting mom or dad at work is usually part of the package. Employers might offer these programs free of cost, or charge a small fee. They might be offered for the entire school vacation week, or just part of the week. Pre-registration is required so that staffing and space can be arranged ahead of time. Alternate plans for bad weather must be made ahead of time.

- **Summer camp programs**

A summer camp program can be based at the worksite, or at a conveniently located recreation center, college or other location. Hours, activities and transportation can be geared to meet the needs of the workforce. As an alternative to a full-scale camp, employers can purchase slots in existing camps or offer a summer camp subsidy program to help employees meet the cost of camp care.

Vacation care or camp programs can be developed by an individual employer, or by a group of employers. They can be managed from within an organization, or can be contracted out to a community-based agency, or existing child care center with extra capacity.